

NEWS

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New Charges Brought Against Defense Attorney Paul Bergrin,
Including Drug Trafficking, Bribery, Running Prostitution Ring

(More)

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NEWARK – A Superseding Indictment returned today against defense attorney Paul Bergrin adds new allegations to his racketeering indictment, including bribery of a witness in an armed robbery case, drug trafficking and assisting a parolee in running a New York prostitution ring, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

The Superseding Indictment also moves Bergrin associate Yolanda Jauregui, a/k/a “Yolanda Bracero,” into the main racketeering count of the Indictment and adds new charges against her, including drug trafficking and attempted murder of a witness in a criminal case. In the original Indictment returned in May, Jauregui was charged only with wire fraud conspiracy and wire fraud, in connection with a mortgage fraud scheme with Bergrin.

Separately today, Jauregui was arrested on a new criminal Complaint charging her with the sale of approximately 1 kilogram of cocaine for \$35,000 in a Clifton shopping center parking lot. This allegedly occurred on June 22, after her May 20 arrest with Bergrin and the other co-defendants named in the original Indictment. The drug charges described in the criminal Complaint are separate from new drug charges against her in the Superseding Indictment.

Jauregui appeared today before U.S. Magistrate Judge Madeline Cox Arleo. At the urging of the government, Judge Arleo revoked Jauregui’s bail and ordered her detained pending trial.

Bergrin remains in federal custody without bail. He is currently scheduled to appear before U.S. District Judge William J. Martini on Thursday on a defense request to have bail set (he has been in custody since his arrest on May 20). The government will argue then that Bergrin remains a flight risk and danger to the community, which is reinforced by the new allegations against him.

The Superseding Indictment expands on the original allegations against Bergrin: that through and by way of his law firm and other entities – described in the new Indictment as the “Bergrin Law Enterprise” – Bergrin was the leader of a racketeering conspiracy that included murder of a witness in a drug case, the hiring of a hitman in an attempt to kill a witness in another drug case, wire fraud and money laundering, and now drug trafficking, prostitution and bribery of a witness, among other things. The charges specifically detail Bergrin’s alleged role in the murder of a confidential witness in an Essex County federal drug case, and his efforts to hire a hitman from Chicago to kill at least one witness in a state drug case being prosecuted in Monmouth County. (That murder never transpired because the “hitman” was a cooperating witness.)

The new charge in the Superseding Indictment related to Jauregui’s alleged attempt to murder a witness involves a potential victim separate from the victims attributed to

Bergrin and others in the original Indictment.

“The breadth, variety and seriousness of the charges allegedly committed by Bergrin and his associates are tragic,” said Fishman. “Equally tragic is that the head of this alleged criminal enterprise was once a prosecutor sworn to uphold and enforce the law.”

Bergrin, 53, of Nutley, was a former Essex County Assistant Prosecutor and Assistant U.S. Attorney between 1985 and 1990.

Among the new allegations in the Superseding Indictment:

- That Bergrin was involved in a drug conspiracy involving multi-kilograms of cocaine from about January 2005 through May 21, 2009.
- That Bergrin assisted a New Jersey parolee in running a prostitution ring when the parolee’s travels were restricted to New Jersey by claiming to the state parole board that the parolee worked in his law firm. Bergrin re-incorporated the prostitution business – NY Confidential Escorts, Inc. – himself by filing articles of incorporation with the New York Department of State on Jan. 25, 2005.
- The new charges also include two forfeiture counts against two properties, both owned by Jauregui, one in Nutley and one in Newark.

The Superseding Indictment also adds three new defendants. Alejandro Barraza-Castro is added as a defendant in the RICO charge. His brother Alonso Barraza-Castro and Jose Jiminez are charged in a cocaine distribution conspiracy, as is Alejandro Barraza-Castro.

Despite indictment, all the defendants are presumed innocent unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorneys John Gay, Joseph N. Minish and Zach Intrater.

Fishman credited the FBI’s Red Bank Resident Agency, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Weysan Dun, DEA Special Agents under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Gerald P. McAleer, and Special Agents of the IRS Criminal Investigation, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge William P. Offord. Fishman also thanked the Monmouth County Prosecutor’s Office, under the direction of Prosecutor Luis A. Valentin, for its assistance in the case.

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